The Retrograde

Monday, May 4, 2026

UTD's official, independently-run student newspaper.

retrogradenews.com

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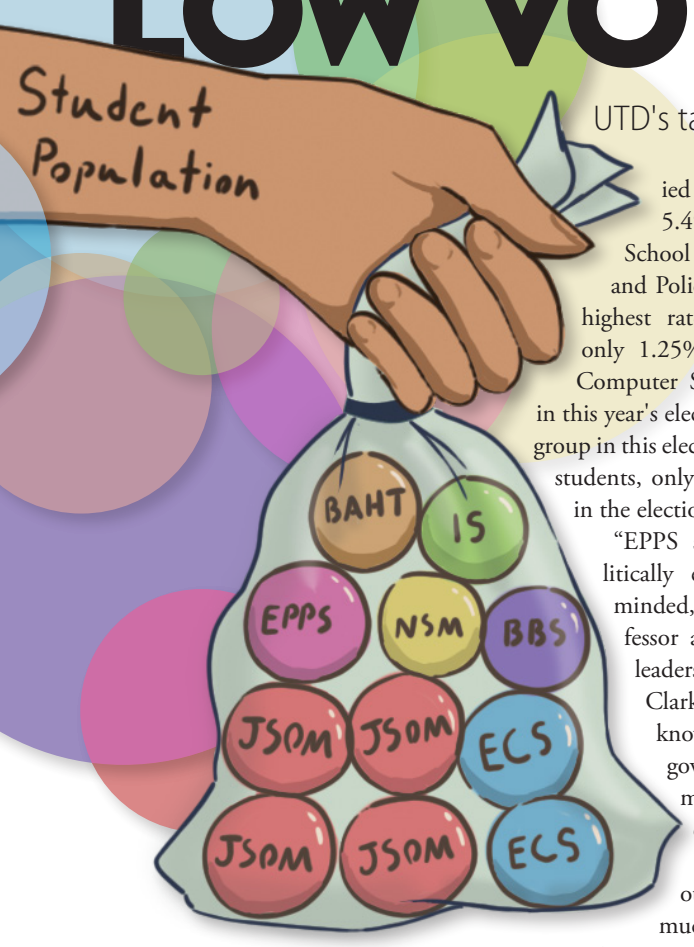
LOW VOTES, FEWER SCHOOLS

UTD's tanked turnout for Student Government elections reflects lessening, skewed student input on university decisions



HAADIYAH MOHAMMED
Retrograde Staff

Student Government's spring 2026 election results indicate that undergraduate votership has been decreasing dramatically, from 3,424 votes in 2019 to just 754 voters this year. That amounts to just 2.5% of the student body, which as of fall 2025 was 30,139. This is the lowest recorded turnout in SG election history. Voter demographics also varied between schools, with 5.49% of students in the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences voting, the highest rate overall. Meanwhile, only 1.25% of Engineering and Computer Science students voted in this year's election. The lowest single group in this election cycle was graduate students, only 0.9% of whom voted in the election.

"EPPS students are very politically engaged and civically minded," political science professor and initiative for civic leadership director Amanda Clark said. "So they would know more about student government and government structures in general."

The EPPS lead over other schools becomes much smaller when looking at the raw voter count. In total, 69 EPPS students voted this year compared to 101 ECS students. Of a little over 7,200 graduate students, only 68 voted.

In general, most schools have few voters. Only 33 students out of 978 students in the Interdisciplinary Studies school voted, meaning 33 students decided who would represent their entire school as a senator.

SG's voter base makeup is correspondingly different from the total undergraduate makeup. While undergraduate student voters not classified under one of the seven schools, such as those with undeclared majors, are 1.22% of the undergraduate population, they make up around 14.85% of the voter base. On the other hand, ECS, which makes up around 31.43% of the school population, is only around 13.4% of the voter base.

EPPS has consistently had a higher voter percentage than other departments in previous years despite decreased voter turnout, from 16.27% in 2024 to 5.49% in 2026, as compared to ECS' fourfold plunge from 5.21% in 2024 to 1.25% in 2026.

"People just don't feel like they're being spoken to," Clark said. "[Voting] is something that takes time. People decide not to engage, or they have been engaged in the past and haven't seen changes in a quick manner and become disillusioned with the whole process."

SG doesn't collect other demographic data — such as student status, information on scholarships, or honors — from voters, so it's unclear how UTD's other demographics are represented in the voter base.

"Most student governments model their ballots after public elections, where collecting race, gender or age directly on a ballot is illegal or heavily restricted," Student Government President Giana Abraham said. "While SG isn't a government, advisers and student leaders worry that asking for demographic data on the ballot itself could suppress turnout because students might feel tracked. It could also create distrust since even if anonymity is promised, not everyone will believe it."

Abraham stated that low voter turnout in SG elections has real consequences for the organization. When students don't vote for their representatives, officials are added by SG mid-year through the appointment process. When these officials are appointed late, there are barriers for effective leadership due to missing key events, trainings and decisions such as those that pertain to the SG budget.

The Retrograde spoke to various students who did not vote, who stated they didn't know that SG elections were happening, or they weren't aware of or interested in SG's impact around campus.

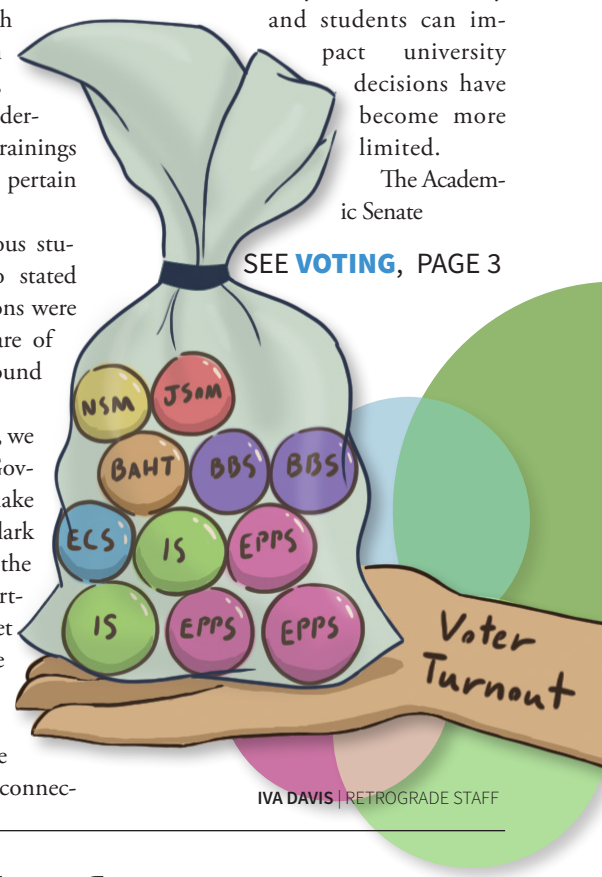
"To increase votership turnout, we should make sure that Student Government is well defined, and make those connections more clear," Clark said. "For example, getting on the ground and speaking with departments such as ECS or NSM to get them more engaged. [That's] the best way to get people to buy in, because now you're talking to them about something they care about, and you're making that connection to why the vote matters, because it goes back to something that really affects you personally."

Other student elections have seen low voter turnouts too. Notably, GSA's election turnout in 2025 was 3.9%, the single lowest voter turnout recorded since its conception. This is in contrast to the state primary elections, where UTD students voted at much higher rates.

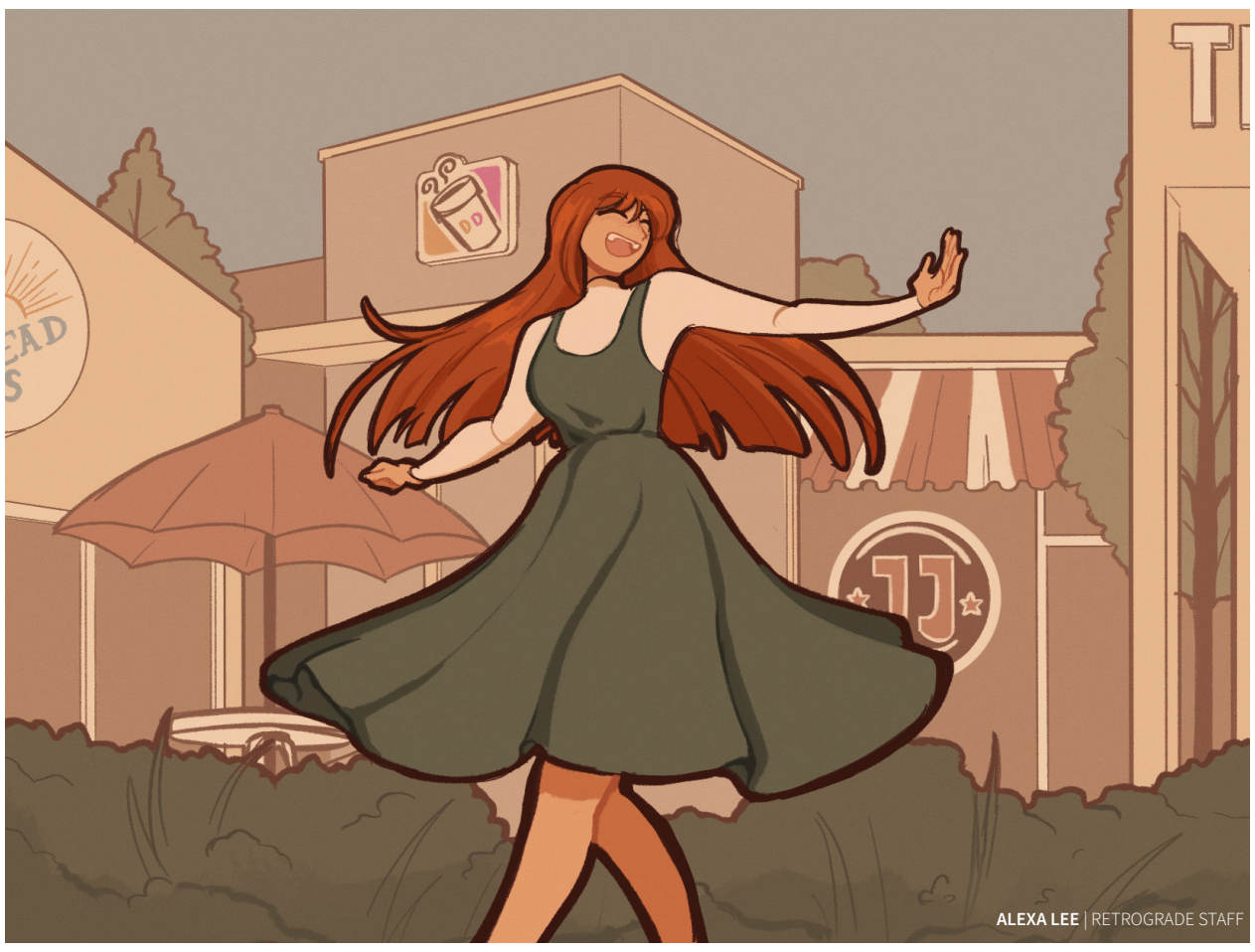
Overall, the ways in which faculty and students can impact university decisions have become more limited.

The Academic Senate

SEE **VOTING**, PAGE 3



IVA DAVIS | RETROGRADE STAFF



ALEXA LEE | RETROGRADE STAFF

What's coming to campus dining?

Six new dining options to open in the coming academic year as construction on campus wraps up

GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTIERREZ
Editor-in-Chief

Dunkin', a Tex-Mex spot called Copperhead Jack's and Jimmy John's are all slated to open in the new Student Union next spring. TeaCo and Halal Shack will be joining them in the new building with more space for their locations as well.

All of this and more was revealed on April 8 in Artemis Hall during UTD Dining's The Food Chat event. Chartwells' resident district manager for UTD Nick Norris was the primary speaker sharing his thoughts on the future of on-campus dining at UTD. Norris said that the five new locations in the Student Union will coincide with the new Starbucks opening in JSOM III this upcoming fall.

"With Tradecraft closing down, we've started to put in a new Starbucks there," Norris said. "JSOM is the busiest academic complex we have on campus, and with this new third wing we expect it will only get busier. With the new Starbucks, we want to make sure we're on the right foot to meet student needs."

Norris said that the new Halal Shack location will not only provide students with the new taco option, which is already available at the Halal Shack in the Comet Cafe, but it will also include Baba's Pizza which offers halal pizza as a brand under the Halal Shack umbrella.

"Halal Shack is our busiest restaurant by far," Norris said. "It is even busier than Chick-fil-A from a sales perspective."

Norris and Director of Food and Retail Services Pam Stanley discussed how long lines were a constant they were hoping to break with the new Student Union alongside more technological integration for their customizable menus. Norris said that various locations on campus already offered Boost mobile ordering services which cut down on the time spent in line for students. Norris said that he hoped spreading out the dining locations would also limit how long lines got.

"We are working very diligently to solve these line problems because we know just how long they can get," Norris said. "My team knows I hate lines. They just drive me crazy."

Halal Shack isn't the only location getting a substantial size increase. TeaCo will have more cooking equipment and has already brought on a chef that will specialize in meals not already on their menu which students will be able to buy at the new TeaCo campus location.

"One of the commitments they made to us this semester was that they would begin building up their ability to provide more than just drinks and their current dishes," Norris said.

The Comet Cafe area, which currently houses Halal Shack, TeaCo and Firehouse Subs, is set to close once the new student union is complete. The entire area will be returned to the Student Union. Dining officials at the event expect that it will be converted into storage or more seating space. Executive chef Thomas To said that the kitchen space would remain for possible future needs.

Norris said that with national brands like Chick-Fil-A and Panda Express, the university and Chartwells did not get much of a say as to how much each item cost.

"They give us a price to put it at," Norris said. "We don't have a lot of control over, really, any of our national brands."

SEE **DINING**, PAGE 3

Two end of semester outages planned

Overground cable bypass and six temporary generators will provide power to campus during power cable replacement

GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTIERREZ
Editor-in-Chief

This weekend, UTD shut down power to the academic core in its first of two outages as crews begin the work to replace the damaged underground cable system that caused three power outages in March.

The first outage began May 2 at 7 p.m. and ended May 3 at 6 a.m. The second outage will take place May 30 from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. All buildings in the academic core will be impacted by both planned outages.

Chief of Operations Rafael Martín said that work crews will replace the M1 and M2 feeders — aging underground power cables installed in the late 2000s that failed last month — and install a temporary power bypass. Crews are expected to spend the four weeks between both outages replacing the underground cabling system that feeds the entire academic core. After the May 30 outage, the temporary bypass will be disconnected and the newly-installed lines energized.

Kelly Kinnard, assistant vice president for facilities services and operations, said six large backup generators will be placed in the empty field near the campus' Central Energy Plant. Kinnard said the generators and bypass are meant to ensure the campus power grid remains operational during the repairs, requiring only two days of outage instead of the entire four-week repair period.

"We do not anticipate using [the generators], but we will have them just in case," Kinnard said.

The work follows three power disruptions in March. The first was caused by a failed cable in the M1 feeder. The second, more disruptive outage occurred when an Atmos Energy contractor drilled through a duct bank carrying power distribution cables and failed to notify the university for days. The third was triggered when the overloaded M2 feeder tripped its circuit breaker.

Martín said the university is pursuing claims against Atmos and its contractor for the cost of repairs and for damages sustained by faculty and researchers. He said faculty who lost equipment or research materials should document their losses as the university will submit claims for reimbursement.

Throughout the May outages, pedestrian and vehicle traffic along Rutford Avenue will be temporarily rerouted. Pedestrian bridges have been installed over above-ground bypass power cables for safe crossing along the western edge of the roadway as of mid-April.

"Our intention is that this work will make our campus more stable and resilient in the future," Martín said. "We thank you for your understanding and patience."

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Police Blotter

April 2

1: An individual committed theft of property valued between $100 and $750 at a bicycle rack near the southwest entrance (near the traffic circle) of JSOM.

April 3

2: An individual committed theft of property valued between $100 and $750 at a bicycle rack on the north side of Dining Hall West.

April 5

3: An individual committed theft of property valued between $100 and $760 in Canyon Creek Heights South.

April 6

4: An individual committed criminal mischief (markings/graffiti) in Berkner Hall.

April 8

5: An individual struck a fixture/highway landscape causing at least $200 in damage (duty on striking) near APC1.

April 9

6: An individual committed theft of property valued between $100 and $750 in Vega Hall.

7: An individual committed invasive visual recording in a bathroom/dressing room at University Village Apartments.

April 11

8: An individual burglarized vehicles in Lot U.

9: An individual committed theft of property valued between $750 and $2,500 in ECSW.

10: An individual burglarized vehicles in Lot U.

April 12

11: An individual burglarized vehicles in University Village Phase 4.

April 13

12: An individual burglarized vehicles in University Village Phase 2.

April 14

13: An individual burglarized vehicles in University Village Phase 5.

April 15

14: An individual committed theft of property valued between $100 and $750 in University Village Phase 2.

15: An individual committed theft of property valued between $100 and $750 in ECSN.

16: An individual committed criminal trespass in University Village Phase 4.

April 19

17: An individual committed theft of property valued between $100 and $750 in Capella Hall.

April 20

18: An individual committed arson of a building (reckless cause damage) in Capella Hall.

19: An individual committed reckless damage in Lot U.

20: An individual committed theft of property valued between $100 and $750 in Helix Hall.

April 23

21: An individual was found in possession of a fictitious license/certificate (minor) at the Police Department.

22: An individual was involved in an accident at the intersection of Waterview Pkwy/ Franklyn Jenifer Dr. (failed to ID/left the scene).

23: An individual was found in possession of drug paraphernalia in University Village Building 25.

April 25

24: An individual committed theft of property valued under $100 at University Village Phase 8, Building 53.

April 26

25: An individual had an outstanding DPS misdemeanor warrant at JSOM.

April 28

26: An individual committed theft of property valued between $100 and $750 at the Police Department.

MAP: UTD | COURTESY

LEGEND

- THEFT
- VEHICLE BURGLARY
- ARSON & PROPERTY DAMAGE
- OTHER CRIMES

From The Retrograde Archives: August 4, 2014

Trapped in Gaza: Student witnesses terror in Gaza Strip as Israeli strikes escalate

By: Anwesha Bhattacharjee

What should have been a time for joy and celebration quickly turned into a race against death and missiles, when days after her sister's wedding, a student watched firsthand Israel's air, land and sea offensive within the Gaza Strip.

Rawan Muhanna found herself stuck in the midst of conflict, cooped up at home for fear of being hit under the open skies, living in uncertainty for two weeks until the American consulate arranged an evacuation for her family through Jordan.

"My sister was there, my cousins, family were all there," Muhanna, a chemistry senior, said. "It was bitter-sweet — bitter in the sense that they're not safe. But sweet in that I was so ready to come home. I had been there two weeks longer than I wanted to, and I felt like I was let out of this prison finally."

A week after they got back, her mother's nine-month pregnant cousin along with her two sons were killed in an air strike in the heart of Gaza. The family had taken refuge in the city after evacuating their home in the Shuja'iyya district of Gaza where dozens were killed after Israel ordered an evacuation and attacked the area.

That is the reality of Gaza. As a child, trips to Gaza had been easier for Muhanna. She remembers flying to Tel Aviv from where they would cross the borders with ease. But each year it's been harder to get in and get out. Palestinians can't land in Tel Aviv anymore.

The last time Muhanna was in Gaza, in 2006, she saw the start of another war.

This year, when her family planned the trip so her sister could get married there, everything seemed normal. They had checked that the Cairo border would be open and flew out, but as soon as they arrived things began to go awry.

They had to wait two extra weeks in Cairo because Egypt did not open the borders to Gaza on time and the wedding had to be postponed.

Soon after the wedding, three teenage Israeli boys were found dead in the West Bank and caused palpable unease among civilians — the people of Gaza knew it wouldn't end well, Muhanna said.

Things escalated quickly going forward, and Muhanna remembers very little; it was all a big blur for her.

Every time she heard the sounds of air strikes she'd look out of the window and see missiles hitting the city. She would check the news on her phone to see which part of the city had been hit and if everyone was safe.

Stepping out of the house, even for food, can be scary and exposes people to the risk of being hit. Very few taxis run in such times, and even when they do, they speed on the empty streets in order to avoid becoming targets.

There are no underground trenches, nowhere to go for cover in the event of an air strike, Muhanna said. The people of Gaza simply sit inside their homes, hoping to stay safe.

A strip of land that is no more than 139 square miles is home to an estimated 1.5 million people, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, or UNRWA, with a per capita density of 11,000 people per square mile.

"The city is so incredibly densely populated, you can't hit anything in the city and not kill someone," she said. "You can't. So there's nowhere safe to go. You can't go into the city. You can't go anywhere."

The Palestinian death toll in Gaza has gone up to 1,400 and 80 percent of the casualties are civilians, while 3 Israeli civilians and 56 Israeli soldiers have died in the four-week conflict, according to the United Nations.

For many kids in Gaza, this is the third war they've lived through, and no one knows how many of them will survive this one to see a fourth.

"I think they'll never become desensitized to loss of life," Muhanna said. "Sometimes (the media) likes to portray people there as people who have a suicidal complex, that they don't care if they're killed. It's never been like that, it'll never be like that. They value life just as much as you value life, just as much as I value life."

Entire families get wiped out in wars like these with some losing 18 or 20 members in one attack, she said.

"Sometimes, there's only one kid left from his whole family," Muhanna said. "You wonder, this kid isn't going to grow up and say, I love Israel, let's make a peace deal. Violence breeds violence."

With burgeoning refugee numbers at the U.N. camps in Gaza and blockades on aid the 1.2 million refugees on the strip face a scarcity of rations.

Even in times of peace, at least half a million displaced Palestinians live in eight recognized U.N. camps. Several blockades on trade since 2007 have taken the economy on a downward spiral rendering more than 80 percent of the employable population dependent on international assistance, according to UNRWA.

Despite having a power plant, which has now been bombed, the people in Gaza only have electricity half of the time even when there is no war, Muhanna said, with eight-hour power cuts after every eight hours of electricity supply.

The younger citizens of Gaza want to get out to find a better life for themselves, but can't, because even in the absence of open warfare, they can't get in or out of Palestine easily.

Entry and exit of people and resources to Gaza is controlled by Egypt and Israel, while in the West Bank, it is controlled by Jordan and Israel. Palestinians living in Gaza can't enter West Bank and vice versa, and getting out of Gaza is an ordeal for Palestinians because many nations don't recognize Palestine as an official country.

Even for American citizens of Palestinian origin, the process of entering West Bank or Gaza to visit family is a challenge, with waits of six or eight hours at the borders, said Tamam Bushnaq, president of Students for Justice in Palestine, or SJP.

Gaza's air space is occupied as is the coast, and drones are a part of normal Gaza life, Muhanna said. It is common to see warships in the distance away from the coast line, or to hear that fishermen have been shot at by navy ships, even when there is no war, she said. The possibility of war is real and very normal for the people of Gaza.

"You look at the people of Gaza right now, they don't have a lot to lose," Muhanna said. "They feel like they're not living anyway."

The start of a new era for UTD's baseball team

RAINIER PEDERSON | RETROGRADE STAFF

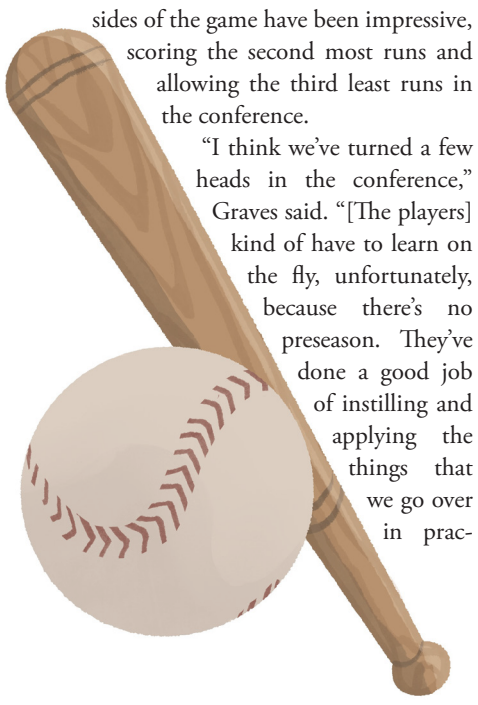
KRISH GANDHI
Staff Writer

With UTD now fully integrated into the Division II Lone Star Conference, the 2025-2026 school year can be defined as the start of a new era. For the Comets baseball team, that means more than just moving up to a more competitive conference. After 24 seasons managing the dugout, head baseball coach Shane Shewmake stepped down from his long tenured position, opening the door for a new, but familiar face to take the reins.

After spending seven years as an assistant to Shewmake, Travis Graves now looks to lead UTD Baseball into a brand new frontier, taking lessons from previous years to build his own legacy.

"I don't want to say it's pressure," Graves said. "It's exciting to run a program. I just want to make sure that I live up to everything [Shewmake] built."

Well into his first season, Graves' Comets have taken the transition in stride. The team boasts an impressive 32-14 record, third in the LSC. Both sides of the game have been impressive, scoring the second most runs and allowing the third least runs in the conference.



"I think we've turned a few heads in the conference," Graves said. "[The players] kind of have to learn on the fly, unfortunately, because there's no preseason. They've done a good job of instilling and applying the things that we go over in practice in the games, and I think that shows [in the] record that we have right now."

Alongside their impressive overall record, the team owns the best home record in the league at 16-3, which Graves attributed to comfortability with the field conditions and being able to play in front of friends and family. Great teams have great players, and the Comets are full of them. Graves attributes this to the work the players put in months before the season even started.

> "I'm just really proud of [the students] and everything they've done for the program."
>
> **— Travis Graves**

"I'd shout out the whole team if I could, they're a great group of kids," Graves said. "Most people don't realize that it starts in August. It's three months out there in the fall, it's 102 degrees, you're not playing a game for another four months, and just the work these kids have put in, the fact that they've bought in as hard as they've played, I'm just really proud of them and everything they've done for the program."

When asked if he could pinpoint a player as the team's MVP, Graves instead came up with two names: senior outfielder and designated hitter Trent McCown and graduate relief pitcher Tag Pacot.

McCown has led the way for the Comets at the plate, leading the team in multiple categories, including his 16 home runs 58 runs batted in,

"There's a little more intensity in doing the little things [baserunning, fielding plate discipline]," McCown said. "Not to say Shewmake didn't cover that at all, but I'd say there's just a little more of a focus on it this year."

Pacot has been an invaluable piece to the Comets bullpen. The relief pitcher leads the team with 17 appearances, an earned run average of 3.19 and 8 saves.

"Tag's been really good on the back end of our bullpen," Graves said. "He's pitching a lot of big games for us [and has] been successful on the mound."

Pacot spoke about the responsibility of being the team's go-to-guy out of the bullpen and praised his coaching staff for helping him and the rest of the pitching staff prepare for each game. Pacot specifically praised Graves and his coaching.

"He's been great," Pacot said. "Props to him because it's his first year as a [head] coach…he's stepped into some pretty big shoes to fill, and the standard hasn't dipped.

Graves also pointed out second baseman Albert Garza, first baseman Kole Kinnison and shortstop Jake Amoroso as other key contributors at the plate and on defense.

When it comes to nurturing his players and building the future of the program, Graves looks to the lessons learned under Shewmake to help guide him.

"[I learned] just how to do things the right way," Graves said. "How to show up every day, how to handle your business, how to be a leader, how to be an example for those kids, knowing when to be a little tough on them, knowing when to hug them [and] being able to stay level-headed throughout the course of an entire season."

With just a few games remaining, Graves and the Comets are looking to finish the season strong. The team is not eligible for the postseason this year, but that does not mean that there is nothing to play for.

"The expectation this spring is to continue what we've been doing," Graves said. "To play hard, to keep getting after it in practice, keep getting better… but the biggest thing is just [to] continue to compete."

Graves believes the Comets winning games and building a reputation this season will set the team up for future success. That success will look like a years-long pedigree for a high standard of play, fruitful recruiting and more — the best foot to enter DII on.

"They don't get a postseason this year but they're leaving behind a legacy," Graves said. "They're leaving behind a mark, something they can be proud of, opening up the door for the future to come on board.

Library requests fee increase

The library is facing mold damage, AI issues, legal threats, according to its annual committee meeting, and needs more resources to solve them

GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTIERREZ
Editor-in-Chief

Editor's note: Meeting documents were accessed by the author, who serves on UTD's Library Committee. The meeting minutes and fee proposal attached online are the basis for this summary article.

The Eugene McDermott Library requested a 17.2% fee increase, meaning a bigger percentage of students' tuition dollars will go toward funding the library instead of funding other services, according to documents from the Library Committee's annual Feb. 16 meeting. Currently, $14.50 from each credit hour a student pays for goes toward the library; the proposed increase would give $17 per credit hour to the library.

The request comes as the library faces significant financial pressure. One of the most significant price hikes has been in dataset subscriptions for the Jindal School of Management and the school of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences, which have increased by 44.4% over the past five years, from $708,158 to over $1 million. Database funding as a whole rose 26.1% and journal subscriptions rose 12.7% in that same timeframe. To cover those increases, the library has cut its book budget by 65.4% — from $858,947 in 2021 to just $297,360 in 2026.

Student fees currently account for roughly two-thirds of library funding. Without an increase, Dean of Libraries Ellen Safley said some services will need to be cut.

The library is facing multiple issues beyond its immediate need for more money. For example, the library's building is not in ideal condition. Construction on the new Student Union and Student Success Center complex damaged drainage around the library, leading to mold in the first-floor office space of the library. The situation cannot be fixed until the construction is complete next spring. Affected library staff have been partially relocated to the Research and Operations Center off Waterview Parkway for the time being.

Artificial intelligence has also taken center stage. AI tools are being embedded into academic search platforms like SCOPUS and JSTOR, raising security and copyright concerns, and students have begun requesting articles hallucinated by AI that do not exist. It is often unclear whether AI can be toggled off or who bears responsibility when students use it unintentionally.

New federal rules around making web and mobile applications accessible to disabled users, which are set to take effect April 24, pose another challenge. Some of the library's vendors that provide web and mobile content have not updated their products to meet the new regulations, making UTD liable for their noncompliance. The library has already lost access to other resources in recent years, such as NetAdvantage because of compliance concerns and the Naxos music database because of its ties with China. Until vendors make their products wholly compliant, staff and faculty can only use bits and pieces of those products which do comply.

The minutes indicate the library is making progress in several areas. Study room availability panels are being installed, and RFID tags have been placed on 116,000 items for better collection security. A neurodivergent-friendly study room redesign is planned with a potential kickoff in fall 2026, the library's 50th anniversary. The library is also adopting Specto, a digital archive platform for campus collections, theses and faculty primary resources, making UTD one of the first adopters.

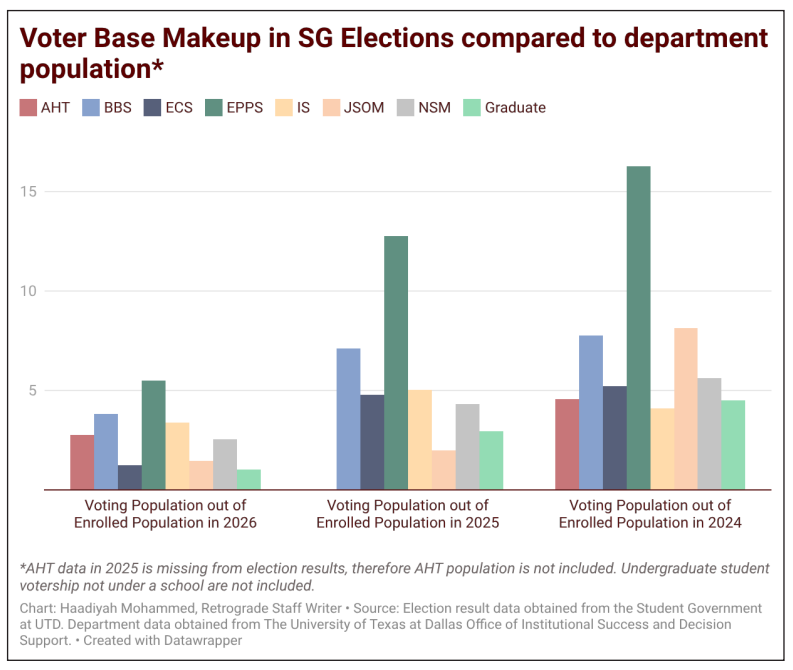
No students on the Library Committee were present at the meeting to hear the fee increase request. The request has been submitted to the outgoing provost, Inga Musselman, and Vice President of Budget and Finance Orkun Toros, but no response is expected until summer. Student Government has not yet taken a position on the increase.

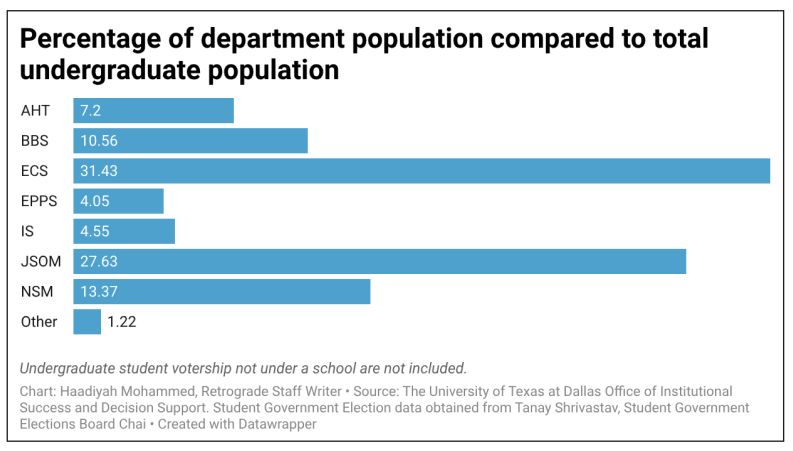
NIHITHA VANDANAPU | RETROGRADE STAFF

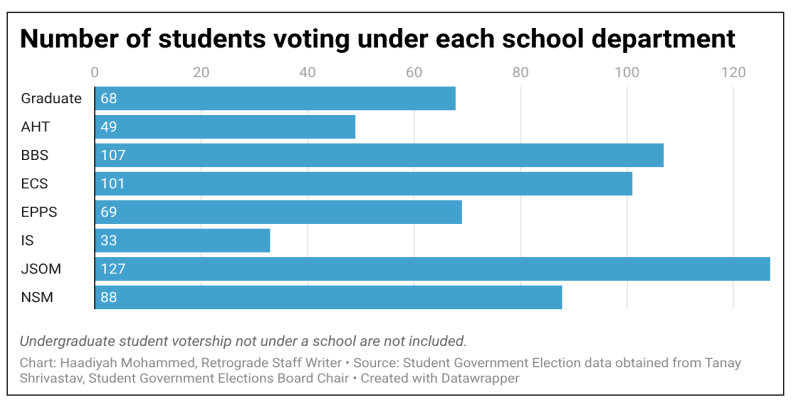
VOTING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

previously allowed faculty to work with students and the university administration to make changes to academic policies and curricula, but this was dissolved just last year. These growing restrictions may also influence lessening interest or trust in student governance.

"Voting doesn't take long, especially in the Student Government elections," Abraham said. "During the election, SG elections board could also ask professors in large, low-turnout colleges for two minutes before lecture to speak on the election. I think there is overall just not much knowledge or student investment in elections on our stem-heavy campus as it stands."


Voter Base Makeup in SG Elections compared to department population*
AHT
BBS
ECS
EPPS
IS
JSOM
NSM
Graduate
15
10
5
Voting Population out of Enrolled Population in 2026
Voting Population out of Enrolled Population in 2025
Voting Population out of Enrolled Population in 2024
*AHT data in 2025 is missing from election results, therefore AHT population is not included. Undergraduate student votership not under a school are not included.
Chart: Haadiyah Mohammed, Retrograde Staff Writer • Source: Election result data obtained from the Student Government at UTD. Department data obtained from The University of Texas at Dallas Office of Institutional Success and Decision Support. • Created with Datawrapper


Percentage of department population compared to total undergraduate population
AHT 7.2
BBS 10.56
ECS 31.43
EPPS 4.05
IS 4.55
JSOM 27.63
NSM 13.37
Other 1.22
Undergraduate student votership not under a school are not included.
Chart: Haadiyah Mohammed, Retrograde Staff Writer • Source: The University of Texas at Dallas Office of Institutional Success and Decision Support. Student Government Election data obtained from Tanay Shrivastav, Student Government Elections Board Chai • Created with Datawrapper



HAADIYAH MOHAMMED | RETROGRADE STAFF

DINING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Norris said that when brands "get too crazy in their pricing," the university can always reconsider whether they are kept on campus. Norris said Chick-Fil-A was considering a price increase to their menu for next semester. Dining marketing director Madeline Anthony said that students with concerns, complaints or suggestions can use the happy or sad stand in Dining Hall West, or contact UTD Dining directly via email, phone or Instagram.

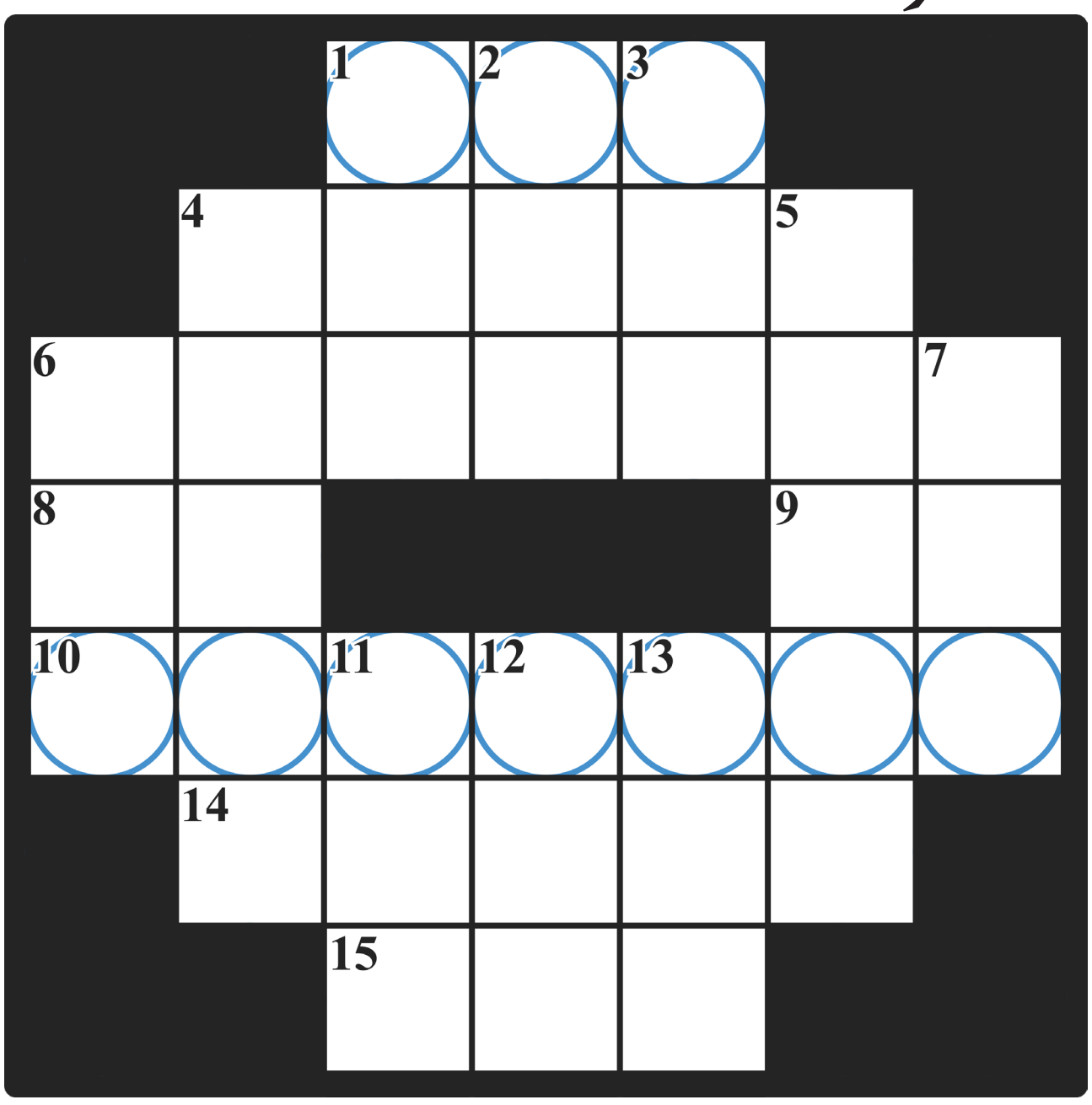
A Rose on the Grey

TYLER CRIVELLA | RETROGRADE STAFF

DIFFICULTY

★★☆☆☆

Answers upside-down below clues



Across

1 Could possibly
4 Window sections
6 Small government major, sprung from spy coil?*
8 To act
9 @
10 Romantic pedals
14 Sports tally
15 Oolong or Earl Grey

Down

1 Negative prefix
2 Whatever
3 Affirmative
4 Swimming spots
5 Frighten
6 Web document: Abbr.
7 Possessive
11 Spooky month: Abbr.
12 "___ is me!"
13 Epoch

Need a hint?

Clues that end with "?" contain some form of wordplay or riddle. Clues that end with "Abbr." are an abbreviation or acronym. Grid spaces with a circle are theme words that tie into the puzzle's title! Clues with "*" are cryptics (see below for more).

Across
1 May
4 Panes
6 Polysci*
8 Do
9 At
10 Flowers
14 Score
15 Tea

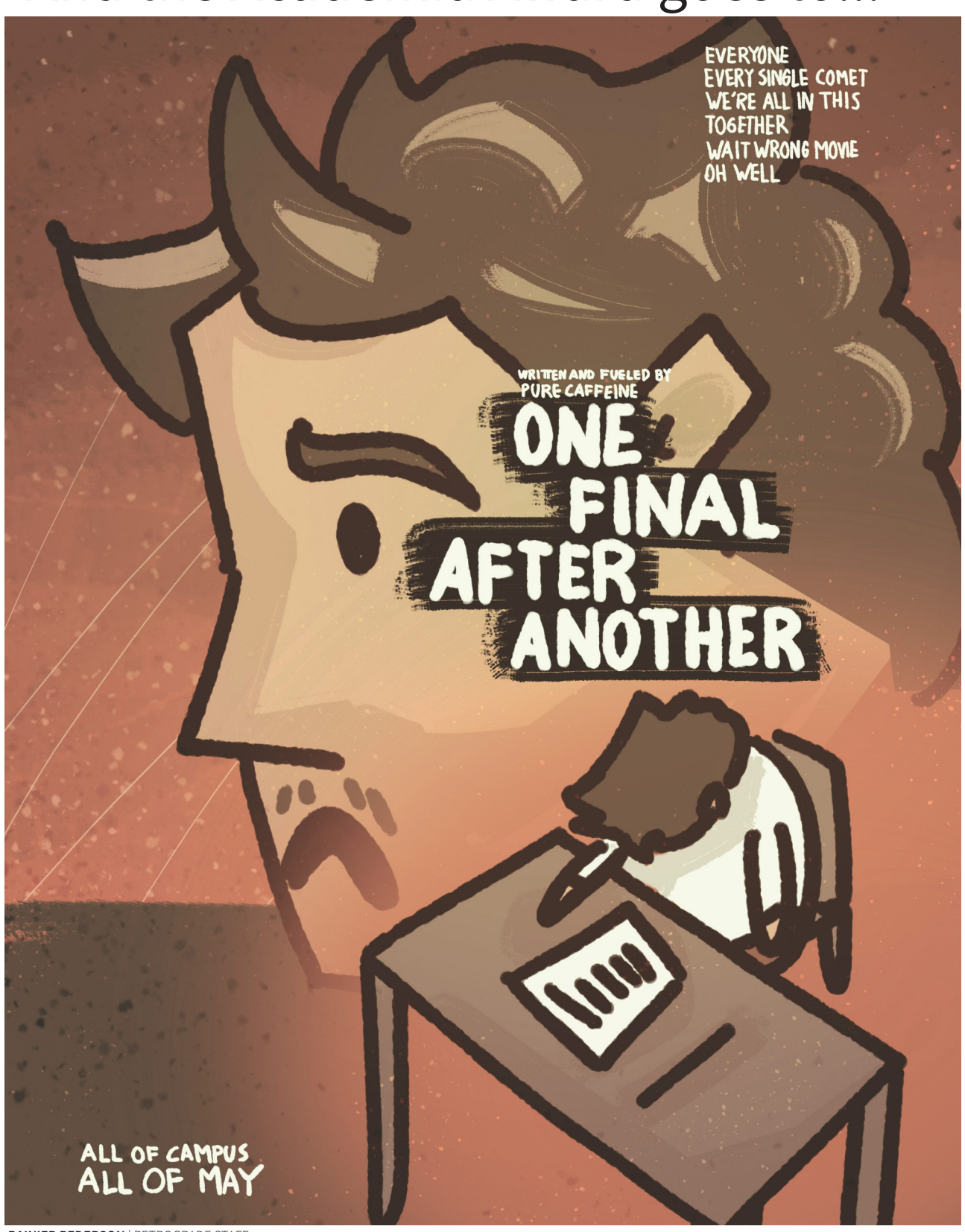
Down
1 Mal
2 Any
3 Yes
4 Pools
5 Scare
6 PDF
7 Its
11 Oct.
12 Woe
13 Era

***What's the cryptic?**

6 Across is a special clue called a cryptic, where each word plays a role in the puzzle. In this clue, "small government major" is the definition of the answer word; "sprung from" is the indicator of what you need to do to solve the clue; "spy coil" is the fodder that, using the indicator, reveals the answer. In this case, you can "spring" the letters of "spy coil" around to find the answer: **polysci**, a shortened version of political science.

Comic

"And the Academia Award goes to..."



RAINIER PEDERSON | RETROGRADE STAFF

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Puzzles

KenKen

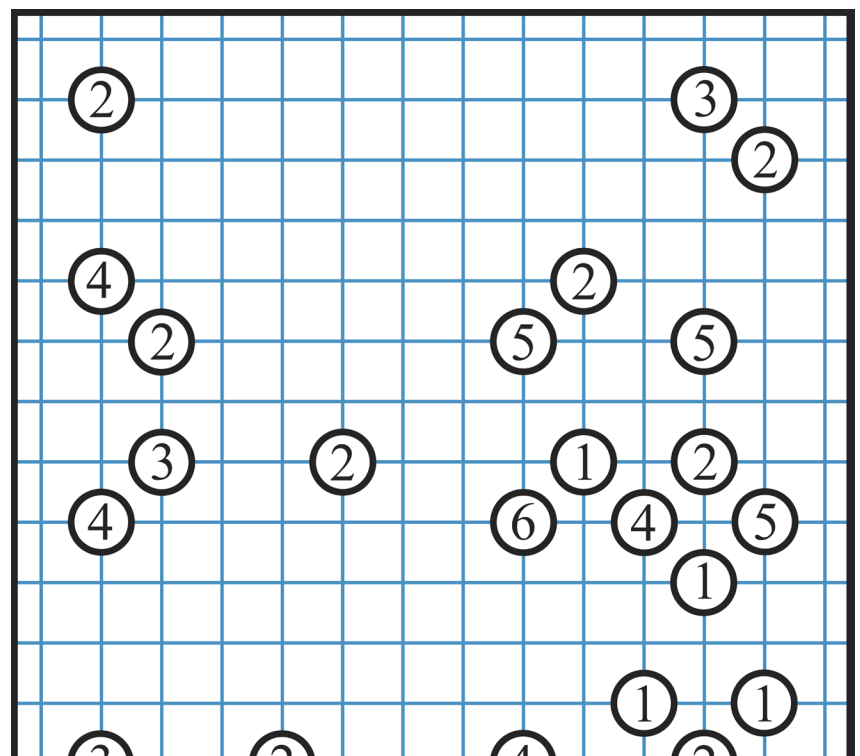
Instructions: Your goal is to fill up the 6×6 grid with numbers 1-6. Each column and row must have exactly one of each number. Each box (outlined with thick black lines) has a target number and a mathematical operation listed in the top-left corner. The numbers in each box must result in the target number when the corresponding mathematical operation is employed. For example, a box with 3+ could be satisfied with 1 and 2, as 1+2=3. Visit our website for a full walkthrough as well as answers to this week's puzzles.

10+	12×		2-	8+	2-
		8×			
7+			13+	7+	
2÷				2÷	
2×	11+	2-		12×	
			10+		

RAINIER PEDERSON | RETROGRADE STAFF

Hashi

Instructions: Connect all islands to one network by drawing only horizontal or vertical lines. Lines may not cross. The total number of lines attached to a given island is the number presented in its circle. Each island may only have two lines attached to it in any given direction.

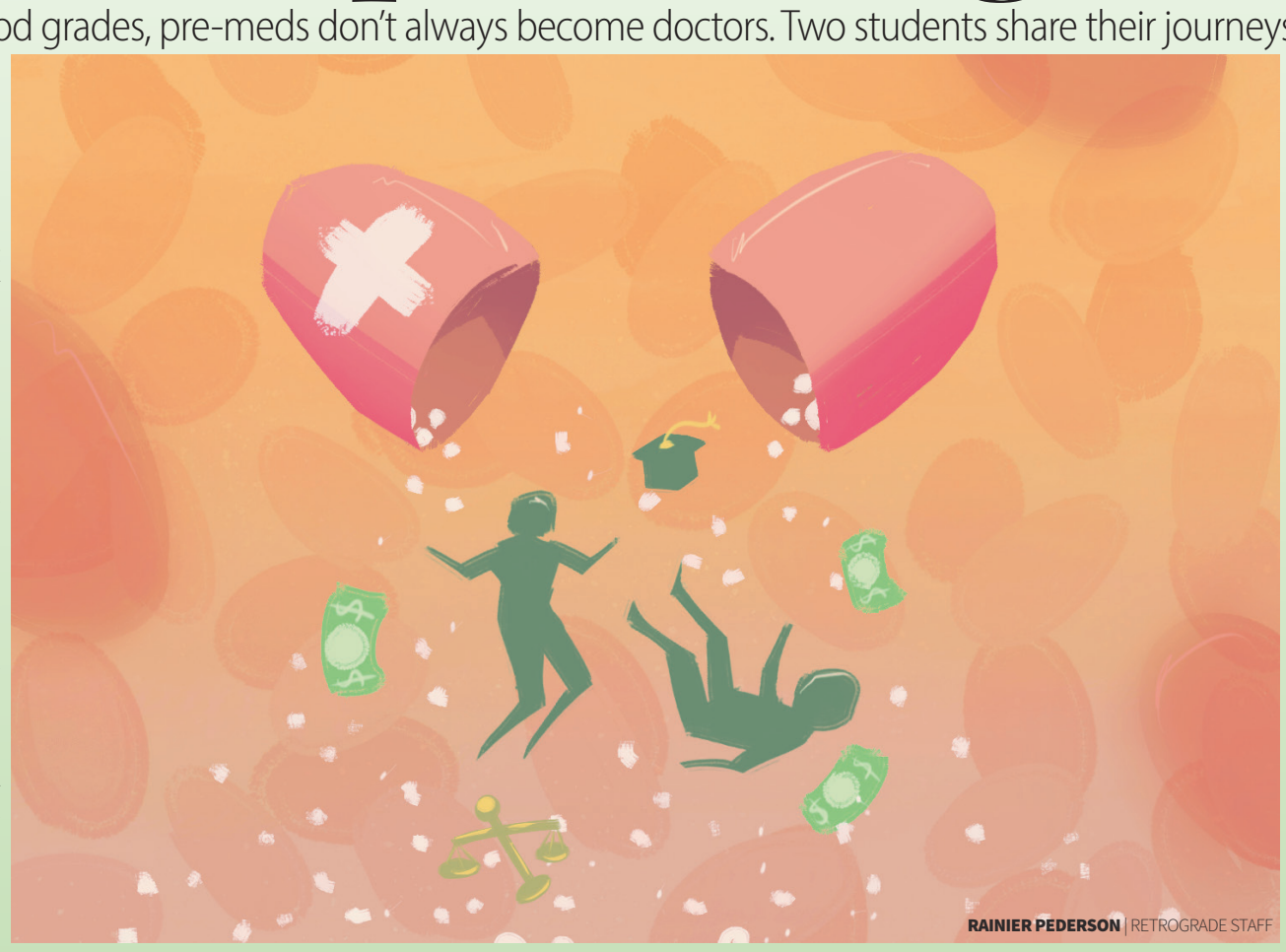


TYLER CRIVELLA | RETROGRADE STAFF

Life in the pre-med graveyard

Despite passion and good grades, pre-meds don't always become doctors. Two students share their journeys toward the other side.

SAHASRA ELAPROLU
Asst. Managing Editor


RAINIER PEDERSON | RETROGRADE STAFF

In the medical community, it seems as if some students were born with stethoscopes around their necks. As early as elementary school, inspired, high achieving students decide their life path, and every year, thousands of undergraduates undertake the pre-medical track. However, most pre-meds inevitably change course, like neuroscience majors Zaima Rahman and Neha Jarabandi, who dedicated most of their undergraduate years to medicine until they realized that the path wasn't for them.

Rahman's Journey

"From a young age, I really liked the idea of working in medicine," Rahman, a fifth-year student said. "I love the idea of helping others. I know it's really cliche but it really did pique my interest. I wasn't into much of the computer realm or the arts or anything. Science was really my main subject and it felt like the most natural case for me to pursue [it]."

Later, witnessing health care firsthand pushed Rahman further into her passion.

"I had a grandma who suffered from cervical cancer and since she stayed with us, I had to help her with a lot of things and go to doctor's appointments with her," Rahman said. "They [my parents and health care professionals] made her life much easier while she was suffering. That was something I really truly grasped. I really liked the idea of making people's lives easier and happier."

At this point, Rahman's mind was made up. She wanted to pursue medicine. As she explored the field, she started contemplating different specialties.

"In the beginning, I really loved the idea of being an oncologist — working in the cancer field," Rahman said. "Later it was pediatric oncology that I was really interested in. I talked to doctors about it and a lot of them said it was very hard but I was very determined. Later, I became more interested in women's psychology and women's health, and in the end, I wanted to become an OBGYN."

Despite her initial enthusiasm, Rahman was weathered by the harsh reality of medicine during her undergraduate years.

"Honestly, as I was going through it, I won't lie, I had a really bad mental breakdown at one point," Rahman said. "I was struggling a lot and a lot of things were happening to me. As classes got harder for me to go through, I started to lose interest in a way. I wasn't intrigued as much as I was before. It wasn't the medicine field that I thought it was going to be."

Rahman said that having to take chemistry classes was one of the main reasons she made the switch from the pre-med neuroscience track to the industrial neuroscience track. The pressure of having to balance many things at once was another reason.

"It was senior year and I still didn't shadow that many hours, I didn't volunteer as much, I didn't join that many clubs and I didn't do any research," Rahman said. "I had to start studying the MCAT. When will I start studying the MCAT? All that kind of got to me. I was very much the type of person to think I could push through it, but then I realized that I wasn't really pushing through it anymore, I was suffering through it."

When she came to the decision to move away from the pre-med track, Rahman was afraid of disappointing all those who had been supporting her, but after speaking to her adviser and seeking guidance from her faith, she decided it was the best way to move forward.

"I'm the eldest daughter so my parents had a lot of high hopes for me," Rahman said. "At the end, when I told them that I changed my [pathway] and that I'm not going to pursue this anymore, I cried. I'm not a crier and I don't back down that easily so when they saw that, they were very supportive and understanding."

Although it was a difficult decision for Rahman to step away from medicine, her horizons have been broadened as she is now considering different pathways.

"When I was a pre-med, I was only focused on becoming a doctor and that was it, but now I love business, I love health care management, I love learning the laws, ethics and regulations behind stuff and I love the idea that I get to talk to the people who also make a difference," Rahman said.

Now Rahman is looking toward careers which aid in clinical trials or ones in the pharmaceutical industry. However, she still feels as though she would have stuck to the medical path if it had not been as difficult.

"I would have never thought of switching my degree plan but I don't blame them because I think the industry needs to be harsh," Rahman said. "It's people's lives you're dealing with and if you make it easier on people, you're not going to have as good of doctors."

Read the rest of this story online at retrogradenews.com.

Remembering the caste abolitionist behind India's founding promise

What the Ambedkar Buddhist Association of Texas celebrated and taught UTD

SUKRITI SINHA
Staff Writer

On May 3, Galaxy Room A was filled with the sounds of endless conversation, laughing children and general festivity. A blue and white banner was stretched across the front of the hall, bearing an illustration of a man in a sharp suit and glasses — the man the whole celebration was honoring d. By 11 a.m., the room was alive with dozens of families and students alike, united by the 135th birth anniversary of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar.

Organized by the Ambedkar Buddhist Association of Texas, alongside UTD's Phi Alpha Theta historical honor society and MENARAH, the event honored Ambedhkar's legacy as a Dalit scholar, lawyer, economist and leading architect of the Indian Constitution. The event drew around a hundred attendees into a space built on the memory of a man that many credit with giving them the right to be in a room like this at all.

Ambedkar was born in 1891 into the Mahar caste, which is a Dalit community designated as "untouchable" under India's ancient caste hierarchy. He was barred from drinking at the same water source as his upper-caste peers, turned away from temples and made to sit separately in school. However, he quickly rose through the ranks of academia, eventually earning degrees from the University of Bombay, Columbia University and the University of London.

As a politician, he demanded separate electorates for Dalits and clashed openly with Gandhi over the state of Dalit social and political rights. As the chairman of the drafting committee of India's Constitution, he abolished untouchability even as it persisted in practice. As a final act of defiance, in 1956, just weeks before his death, Ambedkar along with nearly half a million of his followers converted to Buddhism. This was a move to reject Hinduism as an inherently discriminatory system designed to keep certain individuals permanently below others.

The celebration was emceed by Nila Jeyapriya, a history senior and a member of Phi Alpha Theta. Jagdish Bankar, leader of ABAT, opened with a speech about Ambedkar's enduring relevance, not just to the Dalit community, but to all those who believe in liberty, equality and fraternity. He echoed Ambedkar's sentiment about political democracy and its inability to function without social democracy within communities.

"Unless and until [everyone] has been brought to that bench level where everyone is stated equally, doesn't matter which caste or religion you belong to, then there is no social democracy," Bankar said in a later interview with The Retrograde. "Unless [social democracy] is being brought into action, then there will only be an impact on political development."

Jeyapriya delivered her own speech that made historical connections between Ambedkar and Erode Venkatappa Ramasamy, the social reformer more commonly known as Periyar, whose Self-Respect Movement shook the foundation of Brahminical dominance in South India. Jeyapriya said Periyar was among the first major leaders to recognize and affirm Ambedkar's fight for Dalits, and Periyar saw in it a reflection of his own war against caste hierarchy and religious orthodoxy. Jeyapriya's speech reminded the audience that the Self-Respect and Dravidian movements were never separated from the Ambedkarite movement; instead, they were aligned as parallels.

Another speech was given by Pralay Patil, a business analytics master's student.

Read the rest of this story online at retrogradenews.com

SUKRITI SINHA | ASSISTANT PHOTO EDITOR

HENRY DAVIS | RETROGRADE STAFF

Sticky and soil-deep for Earth Week

To celebrate, students experienced campus' apiary, honey bottling and a real-life "FarmVille"

HENRY DAVIS
Staff Writer

With the intention of celebrating Earth Week, I searched for events on EngageUTD to see what volunteering opportunities were available. Luckily for me, I found three: honey bottling in a Founders lab, apiary inspections with professor Christina Thompson near Lot A and a workday with UTD's Luna Farm, a half-acre micro-farm in Northside. In the interest of going big or going home, I tried them all.

Earth Week started when I walked into a lab facility and saw a huge jug of dark, amber-colored honey, numerous tiny glass bottles and Thompson, who was eager to tell volunteers how to not only bottle the honey, but how to work efficiently to avoid honey spills. Thompson started the bottling by lifting the jug, pouring into the small jars and showing us how easy the task was—which I'm sure it was for her experienced hands. Us newbies, not so much. The first few glass bottles were heavily overflowing with honey spilling onto the table, but as time went on, us volunteers started to understand the fluid dynamics of honey: slow-and-steady pouring into the glass bottles or you won't be able to stop the overflow.

During our struggle, Thompson showed us her collected honeycombs and detailed some interesting notes about their appearance: all honey is the same percentage of sugar to water — 80% to 20% — but the reason for the color change depends on what flowers the bees go to. Flowers that are water-based like orange blossoms give a lighter-color because they have fewer minerals compared to flowers like goldenrods, which makes the honey appear darker. Why that's important for any honey lover, like me, is the flavor. Dark-colored honey has a more intense flavor which is similar to molasses.

Some of the honey bottlers were part of the Office of Sustainability and discussed that they utilized a form of flower-seeding called "chaos gardening" to provide a diversity of flowers that the bees can utilize. The bottling ended with 30 efficiently and well-presented small jars of honey, which would later be given out at the Earth Week fair. Of course, along the way, students had numerous opportunities to try samples of the honey and, luckily for me, I got to take one of the jars.

The next event was similar but certainly more action-packed: inspecting the bee hives that produced the honey we previously bottled, and hopefully collecting even more honey. The hives are located in the apiary northeast of the Administration Building. Later during Earth Week, I walked there and met Thompson, along with other volunteers, and we all suited up into mesh-covered protective suits to prevent any possible stinging. Before getting close to the hives, I didn't know what to expect, but when Thompson lifted what looked like a lid to an old clothes drawer, I was amazed and a little alarmed to see hundreds of worker bees.

I was startled but she was not. Instead, she readied a smoke canister and puffed smoke onto the bees to allow her to inspect the honeycombs without angering the insects. The smoke doesn't calm them, Thompson told us. It prevents them from communicating danger signals to each other using pheromones. Based on countless observations, bees have seemingly adopted an evolutionary mechanism that instructs them to start drinking their honey storage upon being smoked, as though the insects are expecting the "fire" creating the smoke to imminently destroy their hive.

Each drawer, or wooden box, inside had at least eight honeycombs, some empty of honey, some jam-packed and overflowing to the brim. Each one was overflowing with bees scurrying to their next task.

Among the dozen-plus hives, a lot of them were lacking any honey storage, theorized as because of rainy conditions but, thankfully, some were quite promising.

Read the rest of this story online at retrogradenews.com.

IN PHOTOS: A HIDDEN CORNER OF CAMPUS

In the library's quiet Nebula Gallery, the artwork of advanced photography students adorns the walls and tells small, enchanting stories

FAREEHA CHOUDHURY
Staff Writer

From March 27 to April 24, the class of ARTS 4372 Advanced Photography: Portfolio, taught by associate professor Marilyn Waligore, had the opportunity to showcase a piece of their choosing to display in Nebula Gallery, located on the 3rd floor of McDermott Library.

The artworks ornament the walls of Nebula Gallery, an area embedded into the library amongst staff offices and right before the rows of bookshelves begin. This strategic placement encourages all those who pass by, particularly staff and students, to look, ponder upon and appreciate pieces made by fellow UTD community members.

Pieces ranged from capturing quiet glimpses, almost pausing time to focus on one thing amid a million amongst a bustling, fast-paced world, to curated scenes of sentimental items to incite feelings of nostalgia and reflection, to the close relationship between nature and architecture.

Annually led and organized by Waligore for several years now, the exhibition is designed to be like a final project for her students to apply what they have learned throughout her class to a real-world opportunity.

SEE MORE AT
RETROGRADENEWS.COM

PHOTOWORKS 2026
Nebula Gallery • McDermott Library • 3.504
Artist talks March 31, 1:30 – 3:30 pm
March 27 – April 24, 2026
Monday – Friday, 8 – 5 pm
A selection of creative work completed by advanced photography students.
UT DALLAS

PHOTOS BY FAREEHA CHOUDHURY | RETROGRADE STAFF

PHOTO BY ANIME DALLAS | COURTESY
GRAPHICS BY RAINIER PEDERSON | RETROGRADE STAFF

MAR OLOGBAN
Staff Writer

On the weekend of April 17-19 at the Frisco Conference Center, Anime Dallas drew in nerds from across Texas and beyond to celebrate the convention's return after a two-year hiatus.

Anime Dallas is a notable part of the convention scene in North Texas, and has been going on for at least six years. It is an all-ages con with an artist alley, cosplay contest and idol fest, easily the main attraction. At an idol fest, multiple well-known performers cover songs with their own twists or perform their own original music. Nani, also known as Idol Nani, was the lead organizer for Ani-Idol, the idol fest at Anime Dallas.

Nani performed at the official talent show, her own panel performance, and the cosplay contest. Her routine varies depending on her audience and performances, with her panel performances taking the most out of her.

"My idol festival performance setlists are usually between two to three songs, and panel performances can be up to three different dance performances," Nani said. "The prep usually starts with that series or theme I would like to perform, create a setlist, edit my video and audio, choose a character [and] outfit, practice the dances and keep on top of everything."

Idol festival performances, and performances in general, widely vary and don't necessarily follow a theme. At Ani-Idol, the lineup included covers of Babymetal, one of the most popular J-Metal idol groups with the infamous song "Gimme Chocolate!!" Vocaloid — best-known for digital singer Hatsune Miku — Love Live and more. Love Live is a multimedia schoolgirl idol project that is popular in the idol community for its legacy and is the main media Nani covers.

"I usually perform as a character from Aqours, but recently things have changed," Nani said. "I have been focusing on my personal project, that being my idolsona/VTuber."

> "I love the DFW idol community. The community keeps growing and expanding, and it is so exciting!"
>
> **— Idol Nani**

The fun does not stop at idol fest; fans look forward to the meet-and-greet right after the show. With idols selling merchandise to fund their future endeavors, fans have an opportunity to see and share a moment with their favorites. Lennie, also known as LenniePeach, an Utaite idol who covers songs, adores these moments with her fans.

"It was one of my first cons, and I am so happy to see it come back, my [favorite] part [being] the meet and greets after shows," Lennie said. "It warms my heart to hear how people enjoy what I have to do and that it inspires them to be their own idols in their everyday lives.

Kaigai idols are idols influenced by Japanese idol culture outside Japan. Lennie, a soloist kaigai idol, has been performing for about 10 years in total, including over a year as an idol. Lennie's original music focused on a hamster theme, just like the idol, and with all those years of experience comes her own version of pre-show routine, which differs a bit from Nani's.

"Because I am a singing idol, I also make sure to take care of my pipes," Lennie said. "I also like to eat potato chips before vocal performances because I heard long ago it helps, and now it's just a weird luck thing I do."

Performances aren't the only place you find these idols. Peeking into the Vocaloid, Love Live, and K-pop random dance play events will help you spot them having fun right before putting on their own show. The convention's size helps make the community feel more tight-knit at these panels, with even me being able to speak to almost everyone in the idol community at the convention.

"Now that I have graduated, I am able to be a lot more active and see what everyone is up to," Nani said.

Read the rest of this story online at retrogradenews.com.

'Dull' major-related club or JSOM org of the year?

A behind-the-scenes look at how The Accounting Club stood out during this year's OWLIE awards

ZAFIRAH MALLICK | RETROGRADE STAFF

MARIAM SIDDIQUI
Staff Writer

At over 10,000 students, UTD's biggest school JSOM is an immense battlefield in which students and their endless student organizations fight to win acclaim. This year, one JSOM club managed to win the title of organization of the year while sticking to its specific academic niche. The Accounting Club, as the name implies, deals with papers, calculations and balance sheets — it is not a club necessarily associated with excitement. Yet, this year TAC managed to stand out.

On April 11, TAC received the annual Outstanding Worthy Leaders Involved Exceptionally — better known as OWLIE — award for student organization of the year.

The nomination process, finalist selection and ceremony is overseen by the JSOM Dean's Council, a group of students that organize various programs and events on behalf of dean Hasan Pirkul.

> "Planning the socials has been really fun and fruitful because it's been able to unify people of all different majors."
>
> **— Brianna Poone**

Any student, faculty or staff is allowed to nominate clubs or individuals for awards, and the winners are voted on by JSOM faculty and the students of the council. Since spring 2015, JSOM has adopted this convoluted awards process as a tradition to honor standout students, faculty, staff, alumni and student organizations.

Meghana Vendala, accounting master's student and TAC vice president, said she believes part of why TAC won this year is because they have grown into a unique space for peer-to-peer development under their mentorship program.

"We have really seen great change in the mentorship program," Vendala said. "That's something we have kind of struggled with in the past, and we have great mentor-mentee interactions."

Members have nominated TAC for the award for the past three years; however, this is the first time they've received any actual recognition. Although accounting isn't the most glamourous field in business, TAC has been able to incite curiosity in students outside the major. Students outside of TAC, like finance sophomore Aradia Arkadhar, are starting to notice the club despite having no long-term interest in accounting. Arkadhar said he is impressed by the organization's ability to connect different fields together in a more practical environment.

"With accounting, I really only think of people who are passionate about accounting and everything that's related to it, people who want to pursue that in the future," Arkadhar said. "Personally, I may not be in that field, but I did enjoy taking the class."

Accounting junior Brianna Poone, who serves as TAC's vice president of communications, said she focuses on collaborating with other groups in JSOM to help bring different social circles together.

"Planning the socials has been really fun and fruitful because it's been able to unify people of all different majors," Poone said. "Being able to plan socials like that where there's a lot of publicity helps accounting have more exposure, but also gives students the time to network with other students as well,"

Socials for most clubs are a way for people to connect and wind down, and the accounting club is no different. In addition to networking with other students, TAC is also connecting students with professionals, which accounting junior Nour Bitar said was a huge advantage when trying to break into the field of accounting.

"We get the opportunity to learn so much about different companies, [with] so many workshops and recruiters [coming] to a lot of the meetings," Bitar said. "They provide so much information, and it helps you prepare for the future."

Read the rest of this story online at retrogradenews.com.

We don't need a sixth Starbucks. We need Arwa.

GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTIERREZ
Editor-in-Chief

ALEXA LEE | RETROGRADE STAFF

UTD students love to complain. They complain about all the buildings looking like some brutalist fever dream. They complain about the power grid never working and the elevators making ominous sounds. They complain about class, and about not going to class. One of the few things they don't complain about is our lack of Starbucks. Because there, unfortunately, is no lack. And yet university leadership has decided to add another Starbucks inside the upcoming JSOM III building. As one of thousands of caffeine addicts on campus, I am left wondering: why?

We don't need more Starbucks. What we need is an Arwa Yemeni Cafe.

When news first got out that JSOM's Tradecraft coffee shop had been replaced with a wall — a decision JSOM Dean Hasan Pirkul attributed to a Starbucks non-compete clause — my first reaction wasn't shock. Of course the mega-corporation with 38,000 locations worldwide demanded exclusivity, and of course UTD, an institution that prides itself on being "the MIT of the South," folded. Nothing says innovation and entrepreneurship like signing an exclusivity deal with the same company that already has a location in the Student Union, another in Northside, one just down Campbell inside the Tom Thumb and one directly across the Tom Thumb and another inside of the Target on Coit.

Yes, there are five Starbucks within a two-mile radius of campus. Five identical green sirens selling five identical over-roasted lattes. And UTD is adding a sixth.

I also want to be clear, I have nothing against Starbucks as a concept, excluding their horrible labor practices and monopolistic approach, of course. They are a reliable place to buy coffee when you are stranded in an airport or a highway rest stop. But we are not stranded. We are in the middle of the DFW metroplex with suburban sprawl and identical strip malls as far as the eye can see in every direction.

UTD should be more than a decrepit strip mall whose only profitable business is Starbucks. Our campus is home to 30,000 students who each deserve the best coffee our research dollars can buy. It helps that Richardson is one of the most diverse suburbs of Dallas, with a food culture steeped in centuries-old coffee traditions that were, for some unexplainable reason, brought to North Texas. Enter Arwa Yemeni Cafe.

If you have never had Yemeni coffee, I am genuinely sorry. It is not the bitter, burnt, inconsistent sludge that passes for coffee at most American chains. It is spiced — cardamom, ginger, cinnamon and cloves — and served with dates, flatbread and wonderful rose milk cakes, because Yemeni coffee culture understands that caffeine should be an experience. The signature drink, which also happens to be my favorite, is the Adeni Chai. It is a slow-steeped black tea with evaporated milk and a medley of spices that will make you question every chai latte you've ever had. The coffee itself is smooth enough to drink black and complex enough that you won't need to add anything to it.

An Arwa location coming to UTD is not just a hypothetical pipe dream. When Tradecraft was closed, Arwa Yemeni Cafe's official Instagram account commented the eyes emoji under *The Retrograde's* post about the closure. They also already have multiple locations across Dallas, Richardson and Plano — including one on South Greenville Avenue, a roughly 10-minute drive from campus. Hundreds of students, staff and faculty already make the arduous journey there. The demand exists and Arwa is aware of the situation. The only thing missing is a location where students can freely walk between classes instead of risking a midday car ride on UTD's dangerous roads.

UTD loves to talk about diversity, its international student population and its global outlook, but diversity shouldn't just be reduced to a number on a fun facts sheet. What you do to honor and expand that diversity is what matters. One of the best things UTD has the chance to do with this diversity is to allow students from Yemen, Somalia, the Gulf states and Ethiopia — all the places where coffee was born and perfected — to walk into a campus cafe and taste something that reminds them of home. It is just a happy byproduct that the rest of us get that taste too.

Instead, we are getting our sixth Starbucks. The same espresso roast. The same sugary slop syrups. The same $6 drink that tastes like what I can only imagine ECSS would taste like: bad and sticky.

I am not naive. I know that Starbucks has lawyers and money, which JSOM, as our business school, loves. We have already acted to enforce their non-compete clause and so long as that stands, we are unlikely to get any other coffee vendor in the JSOM complex no matter what students want. UTD has a legal department for a reason, though, and they would be best used to weasel the university out of any commitments that may have already been made to Starbucks.

The Tradecraft space is walled off but not gone. The new JSOM building is still under construction. There is time, however little may remain, to change course. To tell Starbucks that five locations in a two-mile radius of campus is more than enough. To call Arwa and ask if they'd like to serve the students who already drive down Greenville Avenue for their cardamom coffee and rose milk cake.

If UTD wants to be the MIT of the South, it should start acting like it. MIT doesn't even have a Starbucks on campus, let alone two of them. What it has are local shops that give students a wide variety of taste. We should provide this opportunity to our students too.

So, I humbly request that UTD blow up or otherwise demolish the new Starbucks location and replace it with an Arwa Yemeni Cafe — legally, of course. Everyone will praise this decision and reap the rewards of good coffee for decades to come.

GRACE COWGER | GRAPHICS EDITOR

Bridgerton weaves family drama, romance, friendship and more with love leading the way

NANDINI SINGH
Life & Arts Editor

Welcome to London in 1813, an era marked by social norms and sky-high expectations. But that's not all it has to be.

One show depicts the messiness of people's relationships and at the same time the beauty of them in this stifling era. "Bridgerton," while set centuries back, makes you feel like the past and the present have converged. The show's premise revolves around the Bridgerton family, a high-class family living in Mayfair, London. Each season revolves around one of the siblings' romances, with the most recent season dedicated to Benedict Bridgerton's romance with Sophie Baek — two characters that highlight the show's key ability to develop character arcs with personalities that are poles apart.

While prior seasons represented Benedict as a man of debauchery, in search of constant excitement, this season presents him with stability and a sense of simplicity throughout it all. Sophie's arc, dissimilar to her cruel childhood, revolves around finding excitement in her life which in turn allows her to express years of subdued feelings.

Truth be told, my initial expectations for this season were wary. Each season represents a specific storyline, such as a fake relationship or friends-to-lover's trope. Season 4 focused on a storyline that has, for better or for worse, been done numerous times: Cinderella. Opening in a Masquerade ball, Sophie Baek, servant of the Penwood house, finds a way to sneak in. Yet, as the show progressed to show the ball, the story was nothing like Cinderella. Sophie herself had no fairy-godmother to support her and Benedict was no Prince Charming as he constantly felt like an outsider as the second son of the family. As the episode closed out, one line truly made me see that, as the town's gossip column said, "With a little imagination, the impossible seems possible, dreams seem tangible, and yet gentle readers one must eventually wake up."

My main critique of this love was the plot. While this storyline presented something unique compared to the other seasons, with varying types of angst, it ultimately fell flat for me. With a show as unique as "Bridgerton," which proudly defies reality by centering interracial couples at a time they were rarer or colorful and expressive wardrobes at a time where they were actually pastel, having class hierarchy as the main issue seemed to against everything "Bridgerton" stood for. I found myself more drawn to the internal conflict between these two dynamic characters and wished that the show prioritized their growth and how they helped each other, rather than a plot driven by the hierarchy of him being of a royal and her being a maid.

I did have an opportunity to see some of the internal character growth with the revolving plot of how Benedict came to love Sophie. One of the most pivotal transformations in season 4 was how he came to love her not as "the woman in silver" but rather for who she was. A simple, yet profound scene was when the pair flew a kite together in the countryside, symbolism that pointed to something deeper. For Sophie, who stated she had not flown a kite since she was a little girl, it was a calling to her, as someone who had spent so much time behind the shadows of Penwood house and her stepmother. For Benedict, it was a moment to share something that was more lighthearted from the typical excitement he sought. For me, it was something real.

Details, to me, is how "Bridgerton" stands out amongst the sea of other shows. It brings flamboyance front and center and the music tells a story of its own, especially grounded in this season, with current pop music orchestrated to create a bygone, classic, yet relatable atmosphere. As the classical rendition of Usher's "DJ Got Us Fallin' in Love" plays in the background, both Sophie and Benedict find themselves drawn to each other's personality: one seeking simplicity and the other a little excitement. As the couple's relationship became more concrete beyond initial attraction, a rendition of Taylor Swift's "Enchanted" told the story as Sophie said her iconic line, "Look how kind he is to her,"

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GRACE COWGER | GRAPHICS EDITOR

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GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTIERREZ
Editor-in-Chief

GRACE COWGER | GRAPHICS EDITOR

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MARIA SHAIKH
Managing Editor

RAINIER PEDERSON | RETROGRADE STAFF

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